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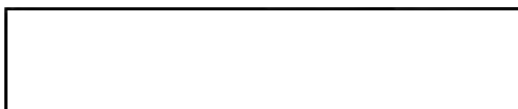
MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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21 March 1967



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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Allied positions near the DMZ were heavily shelled on the night of 20-21 March (Paras. 1-4). Communist forces in regimental strength have attacked US troops in Operation JUNCTION CITY for the second consecutive day (Paras. 5-7).

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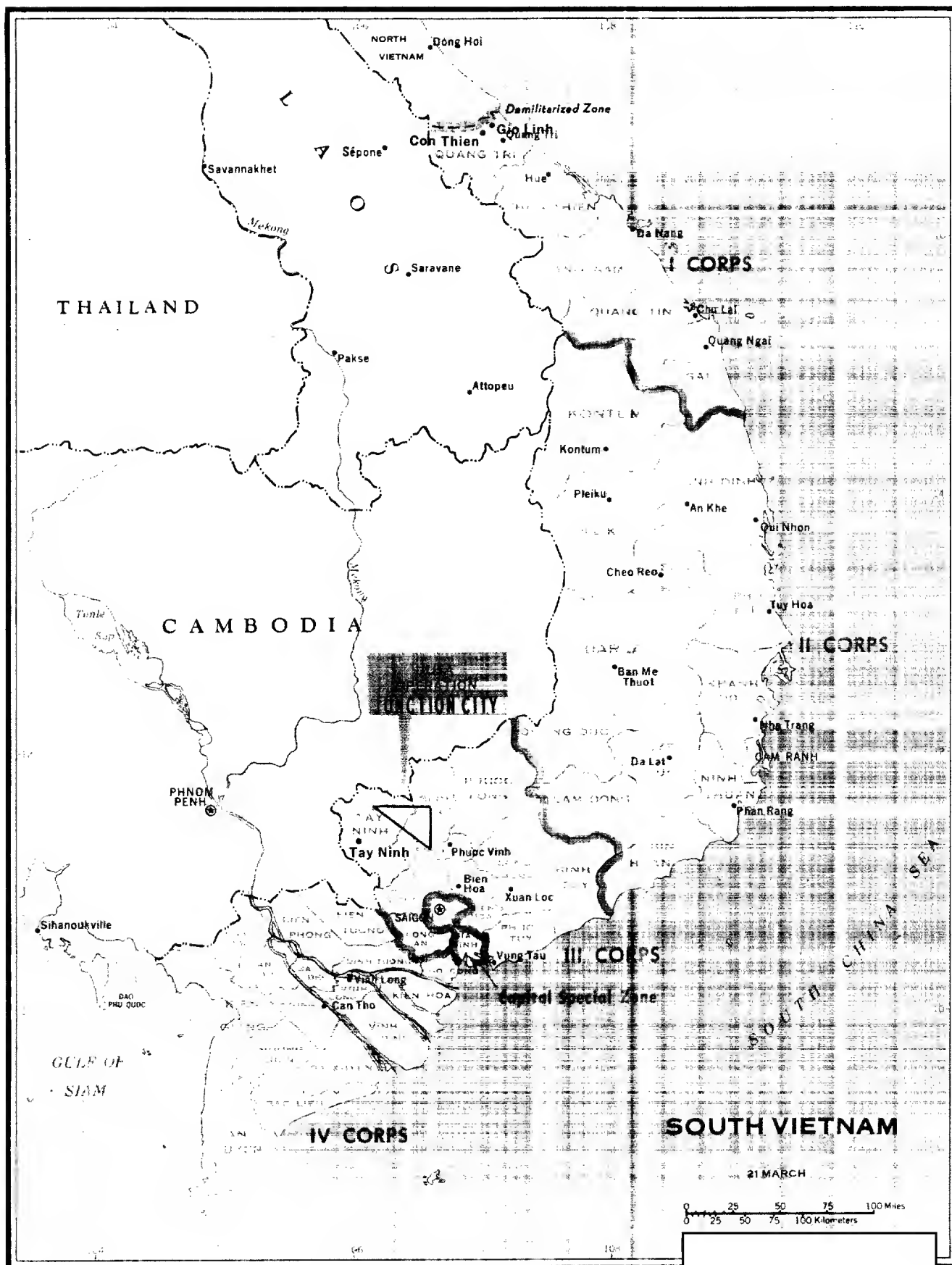
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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Hanoi has broadcast the texts of letters exchanged between President Johnson and Ho Chi Minh (Paras. 1-4). North Vietnam is emphasizing the important role of women in both the government and economy (Paras. 5-7).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces are continuing their aggressive tactics against allied units operating near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in South Vietnam's Quang Tri Province.

2. During the night of 20-21 March, Communist mortar and rocket crews simultaneously fired on the US 175-mm. long-range artillery positions at Gio Linh and the ARVN forward operational base at Con Thien with more than 800 mixed-caliber rounds. The main thrust of these attacks was directed against Gio Linh where an estimated 720 projectiles caused friendly casualties of five killed (2 US) and 73 wounded (60 US). In addition, two 175-mm. artillery pieces were lightly damaged, but remain operational. The secondary objective, Con Thien, was bombarded by approximately 100 mortar rounds, resulting in ARVN losses of three killed and 20 wounded.

3. There is evidence that NVA 122-mm. and 152-mm. heavy artillery units based in the southern DRV may have participated in the attack on Gio Linh. If confirmed, this would mark the first time in the war that North Vietnamese-based artillery has fired into South Vietnam. The magnitude of the action is almost certainly a reflection of sharply intensified North Vietnamese sensitivity to US 175-mm. artillery emplacements just south of the DMZ.

4.

[redacted] indicated that elements of at least four NVA regiments were strategically deployed in the central-eastern portion of northern Quang Tri Province in preparation for possibly imminent large-scale offensive activity against Con Thien and Gio Linh. The massive mortar and rocket attack on 20-21 March could be a

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prelude to a major Communist ground offensive in this area. (See Section III for a further discussion of the NVA build-up in the DMZ area.)

Another Regimental-size Attack Against JUNCTION CITY Forces

5. Early on 21 March, US troops of Operation JUNCTION CITY were attacked by an estimated regimental-size enemy force. The major thrust of the Communist attack appeared to be directed at 18 American howitzers which were in position in a landing zone about 20 miles northeast of Tay Ninh city. The American force, supported by reinforcements and air and artillery strikes, forced the enemy to withdraw after a five-and-a-half hour battle.

6. Preliminary reports indicate at least 425 enemy soldiers were killed compared with American casualties of 30 killed and 109 wounded. More than 150 enemy weapons were captured. Documents found in the area identify the attackers as subordinate to the 272nd Viet Cong Regiment

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7. This attack, the second regimental-size attack initiated by the Communists against US forces participating in Operation JUNCTION CITY in two days, may be in direct response to the repositioning of US troops near enemy positions. The area of operations for JUNCTION CITY was recently shifted eastward, closer to suspected locations of main-force Communists units. This Communist activity may also have been an attempt to achieve a major victory at the time of the Guam conference.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Hanoi radio on 21 March broadcast the text of a letter from President Johnson to Ho Chi Minh and Ho's reply. Ho claimed to have received the President's letter on 10 February, although the Hanoi broadcast said that it was handed to the DRV Embassy in Moscow the first week in February. Ho's reply was dated 15 February, according to Hanoi.

2. Ho restated Hanoi's stand that it would agree to direct talks on the war only if the US "first of all stopped unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV." Ho separately spelled out Hanoi's terms for a final settlement of the war: "the US Government must stop definitively and unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the DRV, recognize the NFLSV, withdraw from South Vietnam all US and satellite troops and let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs." He described these terms as the basic content of the four points.

3. Hanoi radio stated that the correspondence was released in order to juxtapose Hanoi's position on the war with the allied stand as expressed in the communiqué of the Guam conference. It is also possible, however, that Hanoi feared the US would soon release the correspondence in an effort to show that it was making continuing efforts to get talks under way. By acting first, Hanoi may have sought to blunt any propaganda gains by the US.

4. Significantly, Hanoi chose to release the letters following a spate of Chinese Communist propaganda aimed at discouraging any talks on the war. Although Ho's letter does not offer to talk on a basis acceptable to the US Government, it also does not renege on a previous indication by DRV Foreign Minister Trinh that talks "could" start if the bombing stopped unconditionally. Trinh's

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statement of 28 January had been the first public indication by Hanoi of willingness to open discussions solely on this basis. It would thus appear that Hanoi has not acceded to apparent Chinese pressure on the issue.

Role of Women in DRV

5. In a series of propaganda statements on the role of women in the DRV, published on the occasion of the celebration of Women's International Day, North Vietnamese officials have made several backhanded admissions that it is increasingly important to rely on women to run local government and the economy. Although there is no hard evidence that military requirements have placed unmanageable strains on North Vietnamese manpower resources, recent propaganda frequently ties the necessity for significantly greater participation by women in both public and economic affairs directly to the drain of manpower by the war effort.

6. Women traditionally participate extensively in agriculture--probably constituting between 60 and 70 percent of the agricultural labor force. The recent propaganda statements recommend that this trend be extended to other endeavors. A special resolution of the Council of Ministers on 9 March recommended, for example, that women should represent some 35 percent of public service employment and 50 to 70 percent in education, health, light industry, and trade.

7. President Ho Chi Minh's prestige has been lent to this call for increased use of women. In two recent speeches, the DRV President urged women to stand up for their rights and upbraided local leaders for not educating and training women for "cadre" or management roles. A recent government directive on local elections specified that local officials should see to it that 30 to 40 percent of the new district committees members elected this spring were women.

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